

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5680

To require the Federal Election Commission to study voting procedures in Federal elections, award Voting Improvement Grants to States, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 15, 2000

Mr. NADLER (for himself and Mr. SHERMAN) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To require the Federal Election Commission to study voting procedures in Federal elections, award Voting Improvement Grants to States, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “21st Century Electoral
5 Reform Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) With few exceptions, Americans use anti-
9 quated methods to vote and tabulate the results in

1 Federal elections. In the era of the microchip, Fed-
2 eral elections are still conducted using punch cards,
3 paper ballots, and voting machines that were in-
4 vented in the 19th century and are no longer even
5 manufactured.

6 (2) Our failure to modernize our system for vot-
7 ing and administering elections has led to a variety
8 of damaging effects.

9 (3) First, voters experience unnecessary delay,
10 confusion, and inconvenience when voting.

11 (4) Second, our outdated voting system may
12 produce incomplete or inaccurate results, such as
13 when machines tabulating votes misread ballots, or
14 when decades-old voting machines break down on
15 election day.

16 (5) Third, the problems inherent in our current
17 system of voting play a role in depressing voter turn-
18 out, which has declined by nearly 20 percent in only
19 40 years.

20 (6) In addition, voters in rural areas of the
21 United States face unique difficulties in reaching
22 polling places and in funding the acquisition of new
23 technology to administer elections.

24 (7) Recently, States have begun experimenting
25 with new and innovative ways of voting and tab-

1 ulating results. For example, Oregon conducts elec-
2 tions by mail, Delaware voters use computerized vot-
3 ing terminals, and Arizona has conducted a presi-
4 dential primary election via the Internet.

5 (8) During the past decade, the Federal Elec-
6 tion Commission has studied ways to update our vot-
7 ing system. The Commission's National Clearing-
8 house on Election Administration has issued several
9 reports analyzing, among other topics, early voting,
10 all mail elections, and the simplification of election
11 forms and materials.

12 (9) The Federal Election Commission's past ef-
13 forts to study innovations in election administration,
14 as well as its overall experience in election law and
15 practice, make it well-suited to conduct a thorough
16 and definitive examination of new means of voting
17 and tabulation, and to determine which alternate
18 methods of voting promise greater accuracy, conven-
19 ience, and accessibility.

20 **SEC. 3. FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION STUDY.**

21 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF STUDY.—The Federal Elec-
22 tion Commission (referred to in this Act as the “Commis-
23 sion”) shall perform a study of the feasibility and advis-
24 ability of alternate means and instruments of voting in
25 Federal elections.

1 (b) ISSUES TO BE STUDIED.—The means and in-
2 struments studied under subsection (a) shall include, but
3 not be limited to—

4 (1) computerized and other types of voting ma-
5 chines;

6 (2) voting by mail;

7 (3) Internet voting;

8 (4) redesigned ballots;

9 (5) expanding or changing the hours and places
10 in which voting occurs; and

11 (6) means and instruments particularly relevant
12 to voting in rural or urban areas.

13 (c) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Commission shall
14 make recommendations based on the study under sub-
15 section (a) regarding which alternate means and instru-
16 ments of voting, if any, are more convenient and accessible
17 to voters or yield more accurate and expeditious results.

18 (d) PROCEDURE.—The Commission may hold public
19 hearings, take testimony, and receive evidence as nec-
20 essary to complete the study under this section. The num-
21 ber, time, and place of hearings to be held by the Commis-
22 sion shall be determined by the Commission.

23 (e) REPORT.—Not later than December 31, 2001, the
24 Commission shall complete the study under subsection (a)

1 and make public a report setting forth the results of the
2 study.

3 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—There is
4 authorized to be appropriated to the Commission
5 \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2002 to carry out the provi-
6 sions of this section.

7 **SEC. 4. VOTING IMPROVEMENT GRANTS.**

8 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF VOTING IMPROVEMENT
9 GRANTS.—Within 60 days of completing and making pub-
10 lic the study required under section 3, the Commission
11 shall develop and make public a plan to award and dis-
12 burse Voting Improvement Grants to States to facilitate
13 the adoption by States of the recommendations of the
14 Commission for alternate means and instruments of voting
15 made under section 3(c).

16 (b) CRITERIA FOR VOTING IMPROVEMENT
17 GRANTS.—The plan under subsection (a) shall include cri-
18 teria for awarding Voting Improvement Grants, including
19 the ability of a State to effectively implement, on a perma-
20 nent or trial basis, the recommendations of the Commis-
21 sion for alternate means and instruments of voting made
22 under section 3(c).

23 (c) APPLICATION FOR VOTING IMPROVEMENT
24 GRANTS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after
2 the plan under subsection (a) is made public, a State
3 may submit an application to the Commission for a
4 Voting Improvement Grant, in such manner and
5 containing such information as the Commission re-
6 quires.

7 (2) APPROVAL.—Not later than 60 days after
8 the date on which applications are required to be
9 submitted, the Commission shall approve or reject
10 such applications and commence disbursement of
11 awards.

12 (d) MATCHING FUNDS.—The Commission shall en-
13 sure that any State receiving a grant under this section
14 shall expend State funds in an amount equal to not less
15 than 25 percent of the amount of the grant for any project
16 for which the grant was awarded.

17 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
18 authorized to be appropriated to the Commission
19 \$250,000,000 for fiscal year 2002 for grants and adminis-
20 trative costs under this section.

21 **SEC. 5. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS.**

22 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to supersede
23 or conflict with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C.

1 1973aa et seq.) or the National Voter Registration Act
2 of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 1973gg et seq.).

